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ABSTRACT

The advent of mass media in the twentieth century creates certain "ruptures," as Michel Foucault would say, in the perceptual world of human beings as they go about the everyday business of coping with a technological culture grounded in human perception as the rule for expression. Foucault proposes that people watch two tele-visions--the Library and the Museum--names which permit people to experience consciousness in a given modality as "data" (perception) and in a taken modality as "capta" (expression). The Library gives the social condition of a moral world and other people as ethical associates. The Museum is a building with icons and assorted monuments that allows people a different version of the politics of choice. The Library as a product of Modernity is documentary in its spatial desire to fix representation as a message with a specific meaning function of communication contact. By comparison, the Museum as a product of Post-Modernity is monumentary in its temporal power to fix presentation as a context with a specific meaning function of a communication code. Mass media is that technological buffet upon which people look, gaze, and desire with the visual appetite of bio-power, the appetite of the body to engage its visual world in imagination and to capture that world in the body image. (One table is included.) (RS)

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The Library and the Museum Become Tele-vision

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The advent of mass media in the Twentieth Century creates certain "ruptures," as Michel Foucault would say, in the perceptual world of human beings as they go about the everyday business of coping with a technological culture grounded in human perception as the rule for expression. It is the phenomenology of discourse that surrounds this human "coping" that is the focus of my analysis. I shall not be interested in *how* people cope with the mass media, nor with *what* mass media is for them. In short, I shall not be concerned to *name* what or how the media are. Rather, I shall "entertain" the media as that technological buffet upon which we look, gaze, and desire with the visual appetite of bio-power, the appetite of the body to engage its visual world in imagination and to capture that world in the body image.

Recall that the human discourse of coping, the verb "to cope," comes from the Greek *kolaphos,* meaning a buffet, a human encounter with an ongoing array of food dishes on the table with no apparent order, no purpose, no *telos* or goal as we look upon it. The buffet is a visual contest of food; here, the Greek *agon* captures the contest of the buffet. Our look, gaze, and desire engage an agonistic process of perceptual choice, a choice which expresses power. In this our technological age of tele-vision, we choose among the media products (television, radio, film, print, performance, and art) as we choose among the dishes at the buffet table. In both cases, our bodies are party to a visual experience of a competition for the expression of consciousness. We make choices in a contest with ourselves, hoping to break even, perhaps daring to be successful; we cope, and we cope with having a body committed to choose. Whether we are looking over the food table anticipating how much can go on the plate (our *telos* of desire), or whether we are switching TV channels with the remote control anticipating how much consciousness we can take in (our *telos* of power), we cope. Our very body ruptures the rationality of mind. In short, the coach potato is the main dish at the media buffet.

The Politics of Coping

The politics of coping is not innocent. In the axiological contest between desire

and power, human beings make choices. These choices of perception and expression implicate our consciousness of Self in the form of moral issues; they implicate our consciousness of the Other in the form of ethical issues. Last, the choosing implicates our consciousness of the World that we experience in the form of political issues. We confront all of these issues in a trivial sense at the buffet table. That is to say, will I make a disgusting pig out my Self, thereby displaying moral failure? Will I let any Other person see my overflowing plate before I can eat half of it, thereby displaying ethical failure? Or, will I simply linger at the buffet table eating without a plate and pretending without success to belong to the innocent World of the new arrival at the table, thereby displaying political failure?

On the other hand, the serious sense in which we confront morality, ethics, and politics in the mass media is a matter of choice, the act of consciousness by which we say that we *experience* the phenomena of perception and expression. How we experience, we now understand, is an agonistic contest between our perceptual desire and our expressive power as we embody them. As Merleau-Ponty (1964, p. 16) says, "The whole enigma lies in the perceptible world, in that tele-vision which makes us simultaneous with others and the world in the most private aspects of our life." Just as there are moral, ethical, and political modalities of encountering the buffet table as an experience of consciousness, there are similar, but reversed, modes of enveloping the mass media. This is to say, we encounter in the mass media the reversed (expression leads to perception) axiological system of experience in which we proceed from the politics of the Self, to the ethics of the Other, and then to the World as a morality, all three being a constitution of consciousness.

Foucault (1972) suggests to us, in his now famous *L'Archéologie du Savior*, that we may phenomenologically interrogate the technological contest between desire and power (or in my examples, between the buffet table and the television) and its axiology, by turning to the modern practice of history/discourse. He proposes to have us watch two tele-visions. Both tele-visions are representations of representation, they are *names* which permit us to experience consciousness in a *given* modality as data (perception) and in a *taken* modality as capta (expression). The first tele-vision

he calls by the name, the Library. This tele-vision gives us the *social condition* of a moral World and Other people as ethical associates. The Library, according to Foucault, is just what you think it means, i.e., an ordinary library, the library as a building with books and assorted *documents* that allows us the politics of choice. We can choose to read what we like in this giant buffet of paper and print. Perception is an open stack system in the building. The second tele-vision he calls the Museum. Again, the name is straight forward. The Museum is a building with icons and assorted *monuments* that allows us a different version of the politics of choice. This second model of tele-vision gives us the *existential condition* of an ethical World and Other people as moral associates. We can choose to see (expression) what we like in this second grand buffet of art and artifacts. Expression is knowing which building you are in. In short, we have two television sets to watch, one called the Library, the other called the Museum; they are not two channels from which to choose.

The Library and the Museum are in different buildings although they are both "collections." They are both systemic in their organization, although they are systematically different in their content. The Library expands in the same place with no sense of time, while the Museum expands in different places at the same time with no sense of space. A short tour of libraries and museums in any large urban city, like Chicago or New York, will confirm the description. Having set the contest between the Library as perception and the Museum as expression, let us turn to a closer examination of both as modes of tele-vision, as modes of consciousness in their political domains as embodied choice.

The Library Versus The Museum

Foucault (1972, p. 7) sets the problematic of the Library and the Museum rather concisely:

> To be brief, then, let us say that history [discourse; Library], in its traditional form, undertook to 'memorize' the *monuments* of the past, transform them into *documents*, and lend speech to those traces which, in

> themselves, are often not verbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say; in our time, history [discourse; Museum] is that which transforms *documents* into *monuments*.

In this analysis, Foucault (1972) intends that we understand the Library as a "documentary field" (p. 51) in contrast to the Museum with its monumentary field. In the Museum, we find iconic memories of "the history [discourse], not of literature, but of that tangential rumor, that everyday, transient writing that never acquires the status of an *oeuvre*, or is immediately lost: the analysis of sub-literatures, almanacs, reviews and newspapers, temporary successes, anonymous authors" (p. 136-7). The crossroads of perception and expression, the interstices of consciousness, gives us a table of exclusions (Table 1) that points us toward the inclusive (embodying) choices that we make in using them as *technological models of communication*.

Table 1. Foucault's Library and Museum Model of Discourse

The Library	**The Museum**
Document	Monument
Spatial	Temporal
Desire	Power
Representation	Presentation
Message/Contact	Context/Code
Technology of the Imagination [Sign]	Technology of the Image [Representamen]
Subject as Object [subject to]	Object as Subject [subject of]
Public	Private

What we have to realize according to Foucault's model of technologies is the problematic of technological culture, namely, the issue that that we encounter the Library or the Museum as an either/or choice. We are supposed to choose one or the other, but not both at the same time. The logic of Modernity (rules of exclusion) suggests that culture evolved the Library before the Museum, so that a linear logic of

development is always at work. Thus, for example (Clifford 1988), we "read" museums as texts; we get the museum map to tell us where our bodies are (since there is no beginning or end to getting through the museum) and we need to read the name cards in the display cases or underneath the paintings in order to "know" what the exhibit really is! Our Library perception overlays our Museum expression. In the same way, we have committed a lot of time to the literary criticism of mass media phenomena, suffering the whole time from the either/or choice, namely, that one is not the other in this game. Literature is not to be found in media literacy. Media literacy is embarrassed not to be included in just plain "literacy" for the educated person.

On the other hand, Foucault is suggesting a phenomenological, albeit post-modern, perspective in his model of discourse. He suggests that the post-modern logic of inclusion in which the documents are transformed into monuments with the functional use of a both/and logic. We do learn to live the Library and the Museum at the same time and place through the embodiment of tele-vision. The shocking news is that *we are tele-vision;* TV is the technological intension of human consciousness, not its extension as Marshall McLuhan first believed (McLuhan & McLuhan 1988).

At this point then, we may return to several of the key characteristics of the technologies of the Library and the Museum as listed in Table 1. But, we shall be dealing with the integration of the separate elements as a synergism of meaning. The whole of human consciousness is larger than the technological parts that make it up. In fact, it is the rupture or discontinuity of the parts that signals their prior, holistic unity (consciousness) as an embodied phenomenon (experience).

The Library as a product of Modernity is *documentary* in its *spatial desire* to fix *representation* as a *message* with a specific meaning function of communication *contact*. Of course, I am using the familiar terms of the Jakobson model of human communication (Lanigan 1992, p. 20). Within the constraints of the Library model, mass media fulfills several familiar functions. The media messages function "poetically" to (1) form and (2) transform (deductively) the imagination at will. The media aims to complete the phatic function of "literally" touching the viewer. Need

we quote ABC's Barbara Walters one more time, "we're in touch, so you be in touch"? The viewer is the message in a rupture of rationality where the viewer is "subject to" the imagination of the media program. The viewing Subject functions as an Object to him or herself; the viewer is a *public* representation to him/herself! The familiar example of this media technology is the debate format preferred by George Bush in the 1992 presidential elections. This is to say, viewers are represented by reporters who ask questions. The viewers embody a technology of imagination in which they are the Subject as Object: (1) a person as a public who (2) documents the (3) desire to (4) spatially share in the (5) message by letting the reporters (6) contact the candidate for the viewer.

By comparison, the Museum as a product of Post-modernity is *monumentary* in its *temporal power* to fix a *presentation* as a *context* with a specific meaning function of a communication *code* (Lanigan 1992, p. 20). Within the constraints of the Museum model, mass media also fulfills several recognizable functions. The media messages function "referentially" to (1) transform and (2) form (abductively) the *image* at will. The media aims to implement the metalinguistic function of "figuratively" seeing the viewer view the viewer. Relying on ABC one more time, we all know Sam Donaldson by his familiar, but figurative command: "Join us!". The viewer is the code in a rupture of rationality where the viewer is the "subject of" the image in the media program. The Object as Subject is the viewer viewing him or herself; the viewer is a *private* presentation of him/herself as an *image!* The parallel example in the 1992 presidential elections of this media technology is the debate format preferred by Bill Clinton. This is to say, viewers who ask questions are presented as themselves by a moderator (still a "reporter," since the Library model is entailed in the Museum model). The viewers embody a technology of the image in which they are the Object as Subject: (1) a private person that is a (2) monument to the (3) power of the viewer to (4) temporally share in the (5) context by letting the moderator (6) code the viewer for the candidate.

Recall Foucault's dictum that in the discourse of post-modernity, tele-vision "is that which transforms *documents* into *monuments*." What better example of the

synergism of the Modern and Post-modern, the Library and the Museum, than the presidential candidacy of Ross Perot. With Perot, we have the technology of the imagination in a dialectic with the technology of the image where the Subject as Object and Object as Subject merge: (1) a public-private person who (2) documents the monument of (3) desire and power by (4) temporally and spatially constituting the (5) message and its context by letting the reporters (6) contact the viewer's candidate who is coded as the candidate's viewers (the people). In the Perot exemplar, the contest of discourse ruptures the politics of the World with a politics of the Self, the Other's ethics rupture the ethics of the Other, and the morality of the Self ruptures the moral order of the World. Perot is a post-modern arsonist. He is burning down the Library; the record of Bush and Clinton is a document in flames and the ashes are a monument to the Library, to the technology of imagination. And what is left when we survey the ashes? If I may invent an aphorism by reversing a Lévi-Strauss book title, the answer is an image that is moving *From Ashes to Honey*. The Museum that Perot is building on the charred foundation of the network Library is the Museum of the Image, better known as cable television, that sweet desire, that succulent power, that honey of a deal. Indeed, Ross says: *Let's Make a Deal!* For those of you who are only media literate, what I am saying is that Perot is practicing *Nickelodeon* morality on *Larry King Live!* (the ethical watchdog of America) and we love it! In a word, the Perot politics is simply that television is tele-vision.

Let me close my analysis by suggesting the consequences of choosing between either the Library or the Museum, rather than choosing both as a guide to conscious experience about the mass media. Recall that in the mass media I include the usual categories as TV, print, and radio, but I also mean to emphasis alongside them the larger place of art, both visual and performing. When we choose only the Library as our technology of the imagination or only the Museum as our technology of the image, we rupture the rationality of both. Our modernist notions of order no longer serve to sort out the political, the ethical, and the moral. Instead as the critical-cultural theorists so often remind us, we legitimate the ashes of the rational model. We mourn for that lost rationality, we desire the sweet honey of the power that

would have been: we cope.

With Michel Foucault, I would prefer to choose both the Library and the Museum as the representations of representation embodying the names which are ruptured when they are uttered and announced. When the Library burns to become the Museum and when the Museum burns to become the Library, consciousness and experience are ruptured to become discourse. The phenomenology of the moment is simply that human beings produce discourse by the discontinuity of their practices. This discontinuity is never so focused and visible as a unified rupture of the will than in the mass media which makes of us a private person, "as if we were afraid to conceive of the *Other* in the time of our own thought (Foucault 1972, p. 12)." In short, we do not need to cope because coping is what the media does when it looks, gazes, and desires to have the power to embody itself, to be what human beings are by doing what they do. Our power for tele-vision always envelopes our desire for television (or any media) as the lived experience we call consciousness because we have bodies. Put more explicitly, it is the mass media (e.g., television) which ruptures our rational sense of ourselves, thereby liberating our very own existential sense of Self: We Are Tele-Vision.

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